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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2006

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In Today's Papers

#### Turkey's Position on Hamas

All papers: On February 10, the Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni called Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul to discuss Ankara's plans for contacts with Hamas. Gul assured Livni that Turkey will not establish direct contacts with Hamas before the party meets the expectations of the international community. Gul said Turkey is sending messages to Hamas through various channels. In a press conference yesterday with visiting Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Alikbek Jekshenkulov, Gul said that the new representatives of the Palestinian people had been elected as a result of a democratic process, adding that everybody had to act in line with the rules of democracy. Cumhuriyet comments that Gul urged the international community to respect the democratic preferences of the Palestinian people, while Turkiye evaluates the Gul remarks as a warning to Hamas. Yeni Safak reports that Gul called on West to send the 'correct messages' to Hamas. "If we go down the wrong road in the beginning, it will lead the peace process to an impasse," Gul said. Meanwhile, papers also report that President Sezer is expected to visit Israel in June.

#### European Parliament Delegation to Visit Turkish Cyprus

All papers: The European Parliament (EP) high-level contact group for Cyprus will visit Turkish Cyprus from March 5-8. The group will call on Turkish Cypriot "President" Mehmet Ali Talat in his office and will meet with the political parties and NGOs in the north. The Greek and Greek Cypriot members of the group tried to block the delegation's meeting with Talat during a meeting yesterday.

#### About 18 Million Turks Live Under the Poverty Line

Hurriyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet and others: According to figures gathered in 2004 released by Turkey's State

Statistic Institute (TUIK), 909,000 Turks live below the hunger line. The survey showed that 25.6 percent of the population -- 17,991,000 people -- lives below the poverty line. The poverty level stands at 39.97 percent in rural areas and at 16.57 percent in cities.

Freedom of Expression Cases: PM Loses Suit Against Humor Magazine;

Baskin Oran Defends the 'Minority Report'

Vatan, Radikal: Ankara Civil Court rejected PM Erdogan's law suit filed against satirical magazine Penguen. In a show of support for Cumhuriyet cartoonist Musa Kart, who lost a similar case brought by Erdogan, Penguen had published satirical cartoons portraying Erdogan as an elephant, iraffe, monkey, camel, frog, snake, cow and duc under the title "World of Tayyips" [Erdogan's first name] in its February 24, 2005 issue. Musa Kart was ordered to pay to the Prime Minister 5,000 Turkish Lira in damages over a cartoon portraying Erdogan's face on the body of a cat. Radikal reports that, in a separate case, an Ankara court will try two academics, Ibrahim Kaboglu and Professor Baskin Oran today for preparing the "Minority Report" on the status and rights of minorities today. Both academics will be charged with "provoking and separating the Turkish people."

Commenting on the "cartoon crisis" in the nationalist-oriented daily Ortadogu, Kamuran Ozbir warns against viewing the crisis as solely based on religious difference. According to Ozbir, the growing cartoon crisis should also be explained "from historical, political, economic and social perspectives. Currently the crisis serves to the benefit of ultra-nationalist or racist circles in Europe. Similarly

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certain organizations in some Muslim countries are manipulating the issue to benefit their anti-Western agendas."

Iran and US Ambassador Schulte's Visit to Ankara  
Sabah, Zaman and others: US Permanent Representative to the IAEA Greg Schulte is coming to Ankara today to share intelligence about Iran's nuclear program. Sabah says that Ambassador Schulte is coming to convince Turkey that Iran's nuclear power poses a major threat to Turkey. Meanwhile, nine lawmakers from the Turkish-Iranian parliamentary group are planning to visit Iran on February 24 for four-day visit.

Sami Kohen, commenting on Iran in the mainstream daily Milliyet, warns that the possible consequences of a "polarization between the West and Iran" are "critically serious," and they are "not necessarily only military consequences but also political, economic and psychological consequences." Kohen continues that "this possibility is more horrifying than the prospect of Iran's actual possession of an atomic bomb," likening arguing about what is the most dangerous possibility to "trying to decide on a mode of death."

"Valley of the Wolves, Iraq" in the Foreign Press  
Milliyet, Radikal and others: Turkish press reports on the US press coverage of the film 'Valley of the Wolves, Iraq.' Milliyet includes The Drudge Report headline "Crowds Cheer Anti-American Film in Turkey" and reports on an interview with the chairman of the American-Turkish Council (ATC), James Holmes. Holmes is quoted as saying that "This is entertainment and we do not allow entertainment to damage the facts. The leaders of the both countries should be prepared to highlight the differences between the facts and the entertainments. The importance of the US-Turkey relationship should be supported as much as the movie."

TV Highlights

(NTV, 8 AM)

#### International News

- Thousands rallied in Lahore, Pakistan to protest against the Prophet Muhammad cartoons, and two were killed in sporadic clashes with riot police. In Istanbul, a group of that included leftist parties and NGOs gathered in front of the French Consulate in a peaceful rally to protest the cartoons.

- Tehran confirmed that it began resumption of small-scale uranium enrichment at the facility in Natanz. Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul expressed regret over the decision.

- Hundreds of thousands of protestors marched in Beirut to mark the first anniversary of the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri.

- Greek Prime Minister Karamanlis changes six ministers in cabinet reshuffle, appoints Athens Mayor Dora Bakoyanni to the Greek Foreign Minister post.

#### Domestic News

- Landmines on Turkey's southeastern provinces will be swept by private companies in contracts offered by Turkey's State Assets Directorate. 205,000 square km of land will be

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opened to agriculture in the provinces of Mardin, Hatay, Kilis, Gaziantep, Sanliurfa and Sirnak when the landmines are removed.

#### Economic News

- IMF officials rejected speculation of a delay in IMF's third review of Turkey, adding that the date for the review had not been fixed yet.

WILSON